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ABSTRACT

Several types of funding for alternative schools such as list books on Federal grants, foundations, and other sources of money are described in this paper, along with explanations about some of the ways in which an alternative school budget differs from that of a traditional school. Probably the best option from the point of view of stability is being funded by the public school system. This route also offers great advantages in terms of the amount of influence the program can have on more traditional schooling. However, an important difficulty to public funding is the tendency of a traditional system to attempt to make the alternative program conform to its ways. Start-up funding has been, until 1975, available from the Federal government in the form of an ESEA Title III grant. This avenue seems to be closing, but Federal funds are still available for a host of needs. Grants from private institutions and foundations are also available, yet these funds require considerable time and work to get and must be continually renewed. Tuition, as well as fund-raising through direct mail, solicitation of contributions, and some less traditional alternative methods such as the possibility of funding through operating a business or making things to sell are also mentioned. That flexibility is the essential ingredient of an alternative schools' budget as compared with that of a traditional school is highlighted. (Author/AM)

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FUNDING AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

These pages will describe several types of funding for alternative schools; list books on Federal grants, foundations, and other sources of money; and explain some of the ways in which an alternative school budget differs from that of a traditional school. The bottom line in the operation of any organization is money, and an alternative school is no exception. Neither student-centered programs nor warm, open staff nor innovative curricula will "go" unless fueled by cold cash. In this section are listed a number of avenues to explore in search of that cash; a fertile imagination will no doubt come up with others. In an era of tight money no possibility is too far-fetched to be considered, if you really want to run a program.

Probably the best option from the point of view of stability is being funded by the public school system. This route also offers great advantages in terms of the amount of influence your program can have on more traditional schooling. (in Providence, for instance, the most rigid of the "regular" high schools has just announced a five-year "action program" for its students employing many of the concepts introduced five years ago by ALP.) There are important difficulties to public funding. One is the tendency of a traditional system to attempt to make the alternate program conform to its red-tapish ways; it can range from a minor annoyance to a serious threat to some of your innovations. This threat is most potent when the alternate program is housed within a regular school. Another is the difficulty of acquiring these funds in the first place, since the mere establishment of an alternative points to failure in the present system. Nevertheless, for the long haul, it seems (and the Ford Foundation, in Matters of Choice, concurs) that public school funding is the way to go.

Start-up funding has been (until 1975) available from the Federal government in the form of an ESEA-Title III grant. This avenue seems to be closing, but Federal funds are still available for a host of needs. And once you become a part of the local school operation as a Federal program, it is somehow easier to get onto the local budget, perhaps because the program is validated through having received money. Federal aid is also available to programs outside the public system. Every year some of the money appropriated by Congress goes unspent for lack of applicants. Several of the sources in the bibliography list these Federal funds and how to apply for them.

Grants from private institutions and foundations are also available, listings of which appear in the bibliography. Sometimes a small grant from a local foundation will spur other groups to give more. If the school cannot be supported by grant income, it can be used to supplement the regular budget and to fund experimental ventures, evaluations, and research. These funds do take a lot of time and work to get and must be continually renewed.

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Tuition is another possibility as a source of income. Unless you are operating in a fairly wealthy neighborhood, though, you will become involved in raising scholarship money for your less affluent students, as the unsibsidized cost per pupil of running a school is more than the average family can pay, particularly if more than one family member attends the school. Or you may charge tuition according to a sliding scale which is based on family income (which amounts to the same thing). Another form of tuition is the voucher system, in which the school district where the student would otherwise be attending pays the cost of the school of his choice. A final possibility, presently being developed by a private alternate high school in Rhode Island (School One), involves local districts paying tuition to School One for students whose needs are clearly not being met in their present situation and for whom local resources have been exhausted.

Traditional fund-raising through direct mail, solicitation of contributions, banquets, approaches to churches and clubs, etc., is another time-consuming way of obtaining money. It can be a life-saver in emergencies, though; and once your "public" is built up, it can become a source of sustained giving. Colleges become the beneficiaries of wills and trusts; why not alternate schools?

Some alternates are looking into the possibility of funding themselves through operating a business or making things to sell. Several have written books about themselves and are now receiving the income. Jonathan Kozol, in his book Free Schools, gives further suggestions along these lines.

If you are convinced you can do something really worthwhile for kids who need your program, don't let a few rejections cause you to give up. Many times, the money goes to the most persistent. If you can show a powerful grass-roots demand for your services (and a good press never hurts), you will eventually reach that sector of the economy that can be made willing to employ its surplus funds in meeting that demand.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FUNDING INFORMATION SOURCES

Federal Register: a daily listing of all appropriations made by our Federal government

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

Federal Aid Fact Book, Vol. 39-40: an annual listing of all kinds of Federal aid; gives the who, how, where, and when of applying

Federal Aid Information Service
1801 N. Moore Street
Arlington, VA 22209

Federal Aid Reference Manual: same as above, put out by a private source

24 Rope Ferry Road
Waterford, CT 06385

Catalog of Federal Education Assistance Programs: annual indexed listing of all Federal programs applying to education; $5.55

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

Everything You Can Get from the Government for Free: by Howard G. Norback and Frances Norback; lists Federal funding sources for grants, loans, and contracts; beautifully indexed to help you find what you need; $7.95

Litton Educational Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 1638
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Foundation Directory: addresses and purposes of over 2,500 foundations; $15.00

Columbia University Press
136 S. Broadway
New York, NY 10533

Annual Register of Grant Support: lists public and private foundations with information on applying; $47.50

Marquis Academic Media
200 E. Ohio Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Matters of Choice: a report by the Ford Foundation on the pros and cons of private versus public funding for alternate schools; free

Office of Reports
Ford Foundation
320 E. 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017

Youth Alternatives: a publication of financial and legal resources for youth programs of all kinds; $6.00 per year

National Youth Alternatives Project
1830 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20009

Alternative Schools: A Practical Manual, Revised Edition, Dec. 1973: hints for people starting alternate schools: funding strategies, legal codes, accreditation, etc.; $3.50

New Center for Law as Education
Harvard University
14 Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

You Don't Know What You Got Until You Lose It: by Thomas F. Miller and G. R. Orser; "an introduction to accounting, budgeting, and tax planning for small, nonprofit organizations and community groups"; $1.00

Support Center
1822 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

Free Schools: by Jonathan Kozol; pages 107-144 deal with funding; $1.50

Bantam Books, Inc.
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10019

Doing Your Own School: "a practical guide to starting and operating a community school, by the Great Atlantic and Pacific School Conspiracy"; pages 103 to 116; $3.95

Beacon Press
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

ALTERNATE SCHOOL BUDGETING

A flexible budget is the life blood of an alternate school. An alternate school generally must operate on a per pupil expenditure that is equal to or less than the average for the district in which it is located. With these funds the alternate is expected to provide a broader curriculum, more diversified activities, smaller classes, and more personalized student services than a traditional school, while maintaining the same high academic standards. In addition, the program in an alternate school tends to change from month to month, as staff respond to the changing needs and interests of the students. For these two reasons, flexibility is the essential ingredient of an alternate school's budget.

There are certain elements in the budget of a public alternate school which are predetermined by the local school system. For example, the student-teacher ratio in Providence is 25:1; this dictates the number of full-time teachers ALP may hire. And they are paid according the the Providence Public Schools teacher wage scale. Also, ALP is limited in drawing up its budget to using only those line items authorized by the school system. Consequently, we try to budget as much money as possible in those line items which are flexible in their use.

The greatest difference in ALP's budget from that of a traditional high school is the amount allocated to employee salaries. Most high schools spend about 90% of their budget on salaries; ALP spends 69%. Salaried personnel for its 125 students include five teacher-counselors, a coordinator, a secretary, and a community liaison. (Apparently, ALP can do without guidance counselors, custodial personnel, coaches and trainers, social workers, and the number of ancillary services that are considered essential to a modern high school.)

At ALP we do try to avoid specialization of roles in our staffing pattern. Teachers may, for instance, offer courses outside of their areas of certification, if they have a special interest or expertise in a particular area. Every staff member is involved in counseling students, so that the staff can keep in close touch with students' interests and needs. Staff and students also share in the other tasks involved in keeping a school going: manning the telephone, handling discipline, meeting with visitors and parents, filling out transcripts, keeping the school clean, planning curriculum changes, interviewing new staff. This allows each person to develop additional areas of expertise and to exercise his talents in the broadest possible way. Staff at ALP work hard, but they are fully involved in the total operation of the school. Use of volunteer teachers frees staff time for these tasks, and also allows us to increase the variety of course offerings.

The 30% of its budget that ALP does not spend on full-time staff is, then, available for more imaginative uses, mainly in the use of community resources. Almost half of this amount is used to bring into the school professionals in the fields of art, pottery, weaving, and photography, and part-time teachers in academic areas such as law, philosophy, and African culture. Another large chunk of this money pays tuition and transportation for ALP students in courses at universities, specialty schools, and studios in the city, as well as transportation to work placements in community agencies. These funds also finance

trips to plays, films, and historic sites, canoeing and camping expeditions, and cross-cultural experiences like the Spanish class's visit to Mexico. We spend several times as much as a traditional school does on books and educational supplies, partly because our curriculum is constantly changing and partly because we use a variety of paperbacks rather than the longer-lasting hardbound anthologies. And finally, we spend quite a bit more than the typical school on communicating with parents, the media, and the public about what we are doing. The result of this effort has been a great deal of community support, enabling us to continue our program and to expand our use of the community as an educational resource.

There are difficulties about being on a public school budget that have proven to be perennial. It takes a long time in Providence (up to six months at times) to obtain materials we have requsitioned. When the curriculum is changing rapidly, we cannot afford these long delays in obtaining books for courses. We also find ourselves spending hours on justifying our more unorthodox purchases to school department agents. Open purchase orders at bookstores, photography shops, and lumber outlets in the city have enabled us to get materials on short notice and have eliminated a lot of the paperwork accompanying any purchase. A petty cash fund would help in making short-notice purchases, but without this convenience staff find themselves sometimes purchasing supplies out of their own pockets.

The school system's staffing procedures have often hampered our flexibility as an alternate program. Positions are filled in order of their announcement from the top of the teachers' union hiring lists, without consideration of the special requirements for teaching in an alternative school. Thus far, only a certain amount of finagling has enabled us to hire teachers we feel will succeed in this atmosphere. We have also found that the five teachers allotted to us just cannot offer a complete program, from basic skills to college level courses, let alone have time for curriculum planning, counseling, and the many other jobs necessary to the running of the school. The secretary, the community liaison, and the coordinator all end up teaching, in addition to their other work. The secretary, in fact, actually carries administrative responsibilities as well. But the pay scale for secretarial personnel is set by the school system; hence, a severe inequality in the salaries of school personnel results.

Other school systems will have their own areas of inflexibility and red tape. It behooves the alternative school proponents to discover in advance, if possible, what these are and to work out strategies for overcoming any obstacles they present.

COMPARISON OF BUDGETS OF ALTERNATIVE AND TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
BUDGET FOR FY 1974-1975

Budget Line	Alternative ALP	%	Traditional Hope	%
Salaries and wages	$83,091	69.52	$1,107,147	90.88
Fees, contracted services	10,250	8.59	2,260	.19
Telephone and telegraph	600	.50	5,355	.44
Postage, freight, and express	500	.42	750	.06
Automobile allowance	500	.42	300	.02
Transportation-pupils	1,500	1.26	--	--
Heat, light, and power	--	--	18,927*	1.55
Water payments	--	--	890*	.07
Rental of office equipment	--	--	130	.01
Rental of buildings	7,000*	5.86	2,100*	.17
Laundry and cleaning	--	--	150	.01
Dues and subscriptions	--	--	2,075	.17
Tuition payments	2,000	1.67	--	--
In-service	1,850	1.55	--	--
Stationery, forms, office supplies	548	.46	1,391	.11
Textbooks	3,000	2.51	7.017	.57
Reference books	--	--	181	.01
Rebinding of textbooks and library books	--	--	350	.02
Athletic supplies	--	--	5,225	.43
Educational supplies	4.025	3.37	16,042	1.32
Health supplies	--	--	53	.004
Gas-home economics	--	--	1,651	.14
Fuel	--	--	35,000*	2.87
School activities	4,250	3.56	--	--
Books, maps, and charts	400	.33	2,000	.16
Educational equipment	--	--	7,053	.57
Classroom furniture and furnishings	--	--	1,839	.15
Laboratory equipment	--	--	400	.03
Total Budget	$119,514	100.00	$1,218,286	100.00
Number of pupils	125		1,003	
Per pupil expenditure	$956		$1,215	

*Total of rent, fuel and utilities for traditional school - $56,917, or 4.67%

USE OF FLEXIBLE BUDGET LINES, ALP (1974-75)

Contracted Services

Martha, consultant in basic English	$3,150.00
Molly, pottery and craft shop	1,600.00
Roger, photography	1,000.00
Jackie, life drawing	1,000.00
Paul, music	500.00
Eric, basic math and creative black expression	2,800.00
Jane, model for life drawing	70.00

Tuition

John, karate	$1,000.00
Clifton, modern dance	700.00
Kathy, modern dance	300.00

School Activities

First aid kit	$ 63.79
Greenhouse project	151.70
Film for photography	109.50
Diploma covers	62.50
Trip to New York	550.00
Trip to north	143.52
Films for last week of school	400.00
Repair of camera	52.00
Boys' Club gym and pool	674.50
Film excursion	22.50
Mexico trip	450.00
Southwest trip	145.20
New York trip	826.25
Lumber for carpentry	100.00

USE OF FLEXIBLE BUDGET LINES, ALP FY 1975-76

Contracted Services

Richard, carpentry	$ 750.00
Marcel, advanced math	1000.00
Roger, photography	1450.00
Wayne, remedial math	1000.00
Paul, music	1000.00
Delores and Clara, creative black expression	1000.00
Molly, ceramics	1600.00
Pat, weaving and counseling	4000.00
Glen, U.S. history	216.75
Vickie, history and math	1200.00

Tuition

Nancy, jazz dance and gymnastics	$ 500.00
John, karate	1400.00
U-Do-It, auto mechanics facility	400.00

School Activities

films	$ 215.00
trip to Washington, D.C.	160.00
trip to Mexico	900.00
United Farm Workers presentation	35.00

Rent

YMCA	$ 513.00
school building	7700.00